IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Original) An assembly for testing the settling characteristics of a fluid containing solid particles, said assembly comprising:

   a container adapted to contain the fluid;

   a surface disposed within said container and adapted to urge the solid particles into a well as the solid particles settle within the fluid; wherein the well is non-centrally located within said container.

2. (Currently Amended) The assembly of claim 1 wherein said container includes a wall and the well is ~~disposed at the~~ disposed proximate to the wall of said container.

3. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein in said container comprises a cup that includes a cylindrical wall and the assembly further comprises a cylinder disposed within said cup forming an annulus between said cylinder and said cup, wherein the well is accessible through the annulus.

4. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein said surface is inclined.

5. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein said surface is curved.

6. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein said surface further comprises:

   a first surface curved about a first axis that is inclined toward the well; and

   a second surface curved about a second axis that is inclined toward the well, wherein said second surface is lower and steeper than said first surface.

7. (Original) The assembly of claim 6 further comprising a lip formed at the junction of said first and second surfaces.

8. (Original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein said surface and said well are formed within an insert removably disposed in said container.

9. (Original) A testing assembly comprising:

an insert disposed at the bottom of a cup containing a fluid having suspended solid particles;

a well non-centrally located within said insert; and

an upper surface disposed on said insert and adapted to direct settling particles toward said well.

10. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 9 wherein said well is disposed proximate to an outer edge of said insert.

11. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 9 wherein said upper surface is curved and inclined.

12. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 9 wherein said upper surface further comprises a first curved surface and a second curved surface.

13. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 12 wherein the second curved surface is lower and steeper than the first curved surface.

14. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 12 wherein an intersection between the first and second surfaces forms a lip.

15. (Original) The testing assembly of claim 12 wherein the first curved surface and the second curved surface each have a central axis inclined toward the well.

16. (Original) A method for evaluating the settling characteristics of a fluid containing solid particles, wherein said method comprises:

disposing the fluid within a cup;

extracting a first sample of fluid from a well in a non-centrally located position within the cup.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the well is in a position proximate to a wall of the cup.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16 further comprising:

rotating a cylindrical body within the fluid for a selected time period;

extracting a second sample of fluid from the well, wherein the well is accessed through an annulus formed between the rotating cylindrical body and the cup; and

comparing a measured property of the second sample to a measured property of the first sample.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 further comprising:

returning the second sample to the well;

rotating the cylindrical body within the fluid for a selected time period;

extracting a third sample of fluid from the well; and

comparing a measured property of the third sample to the measured properties of the second sample and the first sample.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein between the second sample and the third sample the cylindrical body is rotated at a higher rate than between the first and second sample.